

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

TRSE-00 /056 W

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R 161821Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4104

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 0756

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JM

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER REACTS TO "RUMORMONGERING"

1. IN STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEBRUARY 15, PRIME MINISTER MANLEY CONDEMNED RECENT RUMORMONGERING WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS RANGING "FROM THE AMUSING TO THE ABSURD". HE NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN MANY RECENT RUMORS SURROUNDING HIS HEALTH AND HE COMPARED THESE TO THE OFT-HEARD ALLEGATIONS THAT FIDEL CASTRO IS VISITING JAMAICA SECRETLY AND THAT JAMAICA IS "GOING COMMUNIST". IN MORE SOMBER TONES MANLEY SAID THAT THE CURRENT STATE OF RUMOR-MONGERING IS DIVISIVE AND IS CONTRIBUTING TO A STATE OF ANXIETY. HE SAID THE RUMORS WERE INDUCING "A STATE OF NEAR PANIC IN CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY".

2. MANLEY ADDRESSED HIMSELF SPECIFICALLY TO THE FOLLOWING "MOST SCURRILOUS AMONG THIS PACK OF LIES":

A. THE RUMOR THAT THE GOJ WILL SOON WITHDRAW PASSPORTS FOR THOSE BETWEEN THE AGE OF 15 AND 50 -- OR BAN OVERSEAS TRAVEL ALTOGETHER. MANLEY SAID THE GOJ HAS NO INTENTION OF INSTITUTING

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LEGAL MEASURES TO PROHIBIT TRAVEL AS LONG AS THE LEGAL LIMITS ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONVERSIONS ARE RESPECTED.

B. THE RUMOR THAT THE GOJ WILL IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON THE ABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONS TO TRAVEL OR EMIGRATE -- MANLEY SAID THAT HE HOPED FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF THE JAMAICAN SOCIETY IN ADDRESSING THE NATION'S PROBLEMS BUT THAT

THIS WOULD NOT BE DONE BY COMPULSION.

C. THE RUMOR THAT THE GOJ WILL IMPOSE A TAX ON SAVINGS ACCOUNTS. MANLEY DENIED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EVER UNDERTAKE SUCH A MEASURE.

3. MANLEY WARNED OF THE SPIN-OFF EFFECTS ON TOURISM OF SUCH RUMORS. HE RESTATED THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AND CALLED ON ALL PATRIOTIC JAMAICANS TO PRESENT A POSITIVE IMAGE. HE ENDED WITH A CALL FOR "FOOD RATHER THAN RUMOR" AND "GOODS RATHER THAN LIES".

4. COMMENT: THAT THE STATEMENT HAD TO BE MADE IS PROBABLY MORE NOTEWORTHY THAN WHAT WAS SAID. WE WOULD AGREE WITH MANLEY'S STATEMENT THAT THE SITUATION HERE IN RECENT DAYS HAS BEEN BORDERING ON PANIC. THE FACT THAT MANLEY HAD TO MAKE OFFICIAL REASSURANCES IS A MEASURE OF THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEMS. HIS SPEECH TODAY WILL PROBABLY BE HELPFUL IN CALMING THE ATMOSPHERE SOMEWHAT, AND, AT A MINIMUM, SHOULD PUT TO REST THE ROUND OF RUMORS SURROUNDING HIS PERSONAL HEALTH.
GERARD

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